

Assistant Commissioner for Patents

Application No. 09/820,834

Sub
B1
C1

said footing is being driven into the ground, thereby preventing the socket member from being damaged, an elongated post segment, and a connector axially inserted into said elongated post segment and said socket member for joining said post segment and said footing together in an end-to-end relationship.

sub
C1
B2

10. (twice amended) A footing for holding a post segment above a ground surface, comprising a socket member that is protected against deformation while being implanted into the ground by an outer sleeve, said outer sleeve having trailing and leading ends, said leading end being adapted to be forcibly driven into the ground in response to a driving force applied to said trailing end, said socket member being held within said outer sleeve with said leading end of said outer sleeve extending beyond said socket member so as to define a free space extending axially below said socket member for absorbing the shock in the event that an obstacle is encountered while said footing is being driven into the ground, thereby protecting the socket member against deformation, wherein said socket member defines a socket adapted to receive a post structural member once said footing has been installed in the ground.

sub
C1
B3

21. (twice amended) A post comprising a footing adapted to be driven into the ground, said footing including a socket member that is protected against deformation while being implanted into the ground by an outer sleeve, said outer sleeve having trailing and leading ends, said leading end being adapted to be forcibly driven into the ground in response to a driving force applied to said trailing end, said socket member being received within said outer sleeve with said leading end of said outer sleeve extending beyond said socket member to absorb the shock and thereby protect the socket member in the event that an obstacle is encountered while said footing is being driven into the ground, an elongated post segment, and a connector axially inserted into said elongated post segment and said socket member for joining said post segment and said footing together in an end-to-end relationship, further including at least one stabilizer removably fitted over said outer sleeve to provide lateral stability to said post, wherein said stabilizer includes a pair of strips having slots defined therein for allowing said strips to be inserted one into the other about said outer sleeve.